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Air Force Reserve Contact Center advances through 'transformation'

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DENVER - An Air Force individual mobilization augmentee needs copies of her performance reports. An Air Force retiree has moved and needs to update his address in his personnel records. An Air National Guard member has lost his 20-year service letter and needs a new one.

Last year each of these scenarios would have required the member to call the Air Reserve Personnel Center and speak with a customer service representative. The CSR might have spent five to 10 minutes on the phone with each of the members before the issue was handled.

But all that changed in November 2004, when ARPC's Service Delivery Transformation Team began transforming ARPC by identifying processes that could be automated or centralized to the Contact Center.

"Last fall, the (Service Delivery Transformation) team threw things on the wall that we knew could be automated or moved to the Contact Center," said Maj. Doug Ottinger, deputy director of PSD and the main coordinator of the SDTT.

Working with no additional funding, Major Ottinger and his team identified numerous personnel services that could be provided to the customer in a "self-service" manner using ARPC's Web site.

Members also can now go online and have questions and services answered through the Web. The Web-based service directs the member to input necessary information, so the CSR's have everything they need to serve the customer. "We used to use e-mail, but you'd be going back and forth with the customer to make sure you had all their information," Major Ottinger said. "With Web requests it guides the customer through the process, provides the customer immediate confirmation that we received their request via email and automatically assigns an issue management number for theirs and the CSRs reference."

In addition to the recent self-service enhancements, customers can now go to the Contact Center CSRs for assistance processing foreign language proficiency pay, Montgomery G. I. Bill for selected reserve, academic verifications, community college of the Air Force actions, TRICARE Reserve Select enrollment and managing the tuition assistance program. These were services previously provided by one or two people within ARPC; now it's a responsibility of everyone in the Contact Center.

"Moving these kind of services to the Contact Center is really helping to change people's perception of our CSRs ... they are not telephone operators," said Major

Ottinger. “We’re now providing services that used to be provided by a small group of people spread throughout the building.”

The transformation is not complete either. The goal, says Major Ottinger, is to bring as many “front-line” personnel services from throughout ARPC and the Reserve into the Contact Center or on to the Web.

Soon to be fully automated are the 20-year service letters, which give members certain rights and privileges until they reach 60 years old, and retired pay estimate letters, which were previously processed solely by ARPC’s retirements branch.

“We (ARPC) are on the leading edge of the AF/DP’s vision for personnel service delivery. Just as many of our private sector service providers have already transformed, the Air Force personnel community must transform the way it delivers services to make the best use of our most valuable resource — Airmen. The SDTT is ARPC’s vehicle for reaching that vision,” said Col. Jim Playford, ARPC commander.